

OUR DEDICATED STAFF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Washington (Mr. KILMER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. KILMER. Mr. Speaker, staff are the backbone of this institution. In fact, the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress, over the course of the last few weeks, has had hearings specifically related to how this institution can recruit, retain, and have more diverse staffs.

The staffs who work in Congress are dedicated public servants who are here because they want to do meaningful work for our country. Today, I want to rise to say thank you to some very talented and very special staffers who were instrumental to the success of the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress in the 116th Congress: Allie Neill, Jake Olson, Danielle Stewart, Mariah Harding, and SoRelle Gaynor.

As chair of the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress, I was fortunate to have Ms. Neill and Mr. Olson at the helm leading our staff and guiding our members through an incredibly productive 2 years. Their dedication to our bipartisan mission along with their institutional expertise was critical to the committee's success. To their credit, when they came in to do the work of our committee, they weren't wearing red jerseys or blue jerseys. They were wearing jerseys that said: Let's try to make Congress work better for the American people.

On top of that, Ms. Stewart did an extraordinary job of amplifying the work of our committee and sharing it with the American people. Ms. Harding handled the critical behind-the-scenes work like a pro. Under Ms. Gaynor's direction the committee produced an outstanding final report for the 116th Congress.

These staffers exemplify public service at its finest, and I want to rise today to thank them for their contributions.

THE RACIST LEFT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCLINTOCK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, racism is the practice of according rights and privileges to an individual not based on equality under the law, but, rather, according to what race that person was born. It is antithetical to every principle our country was founded upon, from the promise of our Declaration of Independence that all men are created equal to the equal protection clause of our Constitution. It was a malignancy we fought a civil war to remove. For generations, it has been denounced by every American of goodwill for the evil that it is.

Yet, this dangerous social pathology is now rampant in this House. The Ju-

diciary Committee recently adopted a measure on a party-line vote to establish a commission with the avowed purpose of enshrining racism into law under the guise of slavery reparations.

The biased composition of this commission—there is not a single Republican appointment—lays its intent bare for all to see. It is designed to reach into the dead past, revive its most malevolent conflicts, and reintroduce them into our age.

I cannot imagine a more divisive, polarizing, or unjust measure than one that would use government force to require people who never owned slaves to pay reparations to people who never were slaves—based not on anything they did, but solely because of what race they were born.

History offers us an inexhaustible supply of grievances and injustices that are powerful enough to stoke hatreds and resentments that can tear any society apart. That is what this movement is all about. It is evil in its effect, if not in its intent.

Lincoln often pointed out that our country was born into a world where slavery was an established institution. The American Founders reviled it, and they placed principles in our founding documents that they were confident would ultimately place that wicked institution upon the course of ultimate extinction and would lead to a republic where men and women of every race and background could, together, enjoy the blessings of liberty. Equal justice under law means a colorblind society where race simply becomes irrelevant, and until recently, we had made tremendous progress toward that vision as a nation.

Martin Luther King expressed the gold standard of racial harmony: that we should be judged by the content of our character and not the color of our skin. It is the equal protection of the law and the vision of a colorblind society stretching from the American Founders to Lincoln and King that is now under attack by the racist left.

Yes, there are racists in our society. There are racists of all colors in every society; it is the baser side of human nature. But no nation has struggled harder to transcend that nature and isolate and marginalize its racists than have Americans.

Yes, extremely damaging and foolish policies have disproportionately impacted Black communities in recent decades. Union-dominated schools that have failed to educate our children in inner cities, welfare programs that have destroyed families, and the withdrawal of police protection from crime-plagued neighborhoods are certainly among them. But these policies devastate every community where they are practiced, regardless of race. The answer is to change those policies, not to excuse them because they are ideologically pleasing to the left.

The racist left is content to ignore all of these current ills. It, instead, attempts to set neighbor against neigh-

bor and American against American on the basis of their race. They say this is healing. It is precisely the opposite. They know it. Indeed, they count on it.

I think all Americans of goodwill and of every race and creed have had enough of this. We are tired of seeing our children taught to hate themselves and to hate each other. We are tired of seeing our country demonized as racist by those whose first and solitary focus is on race. We are tired of the lie that our Nation is systemically racist when it has done more to produce a civil and tolerant multiracial society than any people in the history of civilization.

It is long past time that every American of every heritage denounces this evil for what it is and to extirpate from our civil discourse those race-baiters of every persuasion who have polluted our national dialogue and corrupted our national heritage.

PROTECT THE RAIZAL PEOPLE OF THE SAN ANDRES ARCHIPELAGO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I have very strong views about the national protest taking place across Colombia over the past 2 weeks and the absolutely brutal response against the demonstrators by the Colombian public security forces.

But today, I rise about a very different and specific human rights crisis in Colombia, one that receives little attention in the United States and from the international community. I am speaking about the plight of the Raizal people who have lived for centuries on the islands that make up the San Andres archipelago.

The Raizal are descendants of Pilgrim settlers, enslaved Africans, Amer-Indians, and British emigrants. They speak Creole English, and most are Protestants.

However, in a twist of fate characteristic of the history of colonization, the islands on which they live—San Andres, Ketlina, and Old Providence—are under the sovereignty of Colombia, whose population is Spanish speaking and largely Catholic. It has been that way since the 1800s.

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For a long time, the Raizal were left largely to their own devices. They were self-governed with a self-sustaining economy.

But in the 1950s, the Colombian Government decided to strengthen control over the islands by promoting tourism and mass migration from the mainland. The result is that San Andres, the largest of the islands, is extremely overpopulated. The Raizal have been reduced to minority status on that island. And the development for tourism has so seriously damaged the pristine environment that UNESCO tried to protect it by declaring it a biosphere reserve in 2000.

But the smaller islands of Old Providence, accessible only by ferry or small plane, and Ketlina, connected by a bridge, largely escaped the fate of San Andres. The population of both is almost entirely Raizal, and their communities have successfully resisted efforts to bring in big development projects or build military installations there until now.

The islands were hit very hard by Hurricane Iota last November. On Old Providence, hundreds of houses were damaged and hundreds more destroyed completely.

Colombian President Ivan Duque promised to rebuild in 100 days. It has now been 6 months. The next hurricane season is on the horizon, and reconstruction is nowhere near complete.

The delay is partly due to the government's failure to properly consult with those most affected. But what the government did do was allow the Colombian Navy to take advantage of the crisis and build a new dock, a project the community had previously rejected due to the risk of environmental damage.

The navy has installed its dock near a fishermen's co-op whose own dock was destroyed by Iota, cutting off its members' access. In response, fishermen whose livelihoods are at risk have been protesting for 62 days.

There is a profound difference of vision between the islanders and the mainlanders. The Raizal fear that if the government continues to ignore them, their way of life in Old Providence and Ketlina will be overtaken by the mainland population, as has happened in San Andres. That would be a major violation of the human rights of the Raizal people.

In 2004, when the U.N. Special Rapporteur on racism visited the archipelago, the Raizal communities complained of political discrimination and marginalization from the decision-making processes that affected their territory. They also described cultural domination by the mainland, for example, the exclusive use of Spanish as the language of instruction and pressure to convert to Catholicism to be able to advance economically.

More than 15 years later, the Colombian Government persists with many of the same practices that led the Raizal to lodge those human rights complaints.

It is time to change course. It is time to prioritize the human rights of the Raizal people. It is time for the government to recognize the Raizal as legitimate interlocutors and respect their right to protect their ancestral lands.

I urge the Duque government to accelerate reconstruction so that the people have adequate shelter and medical facilities as soon as possible, certainly before the next hurricane season.

I urge the government to stop importing labor from the mainland and, instead, employ local Raizal workers.

I urge the government to remove the navy's new dock, rebuild the co-op's

dock instead, and end further militarization of the islands.

I urge a thorough review of any U.S. Government resources used for post-Iota reconstruction to ensure that they were expended in full compliance with requirements of prior consultation.

And I encourage the United Nations and the Inter-American human rights bodies to immediately review the situation of the Raizal people and issue new recommendations to the Colombian Government to ensure that their rights are fully protected going forward.

CELEBRATING GEORGE MILLS' 100TH BIRTHDAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BROOKS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROOKS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor George Mills, an extraordinary Alabamian I recently met in Decatur at a Kiwanis pancake breakfast. George is a former World War II prisoner of war and will celebrate his 100th birthday on May 23.

The youngest of eight children, George graduated from Decatur High School in 1939. While in high school, George worked for Western Union, delivering telegrams on his bicycle from 5 to 11 every night. After high school graduation, George sold pianos for Forbes Piano Company.

In 1942, at age 21, George Mills enlisted in the Army and was assigned to Company E, 109th Division under General Omar Bradley, making him a member of one of World War II's best-trained divisions.

Sergeant Mills arrived on Omaha Beach 25 days after D-day. For 7 months, he was in combat and engaged in four major battles, including the Battle of Normandy, the Battle of the Bulge, and the battle at the Hurtgen Forest.

After the Hurtgen Forest battle, George and his company were sent to the Germany-Luxembourg border, where, one morning, they were awakened by exploding rockets and artillery. His company was surrounded by 15,000 Axis forces. Despite overwhelming odds, they held their ground for several days.

Eventually, Axis forces blew a hole in the house Mills was sheltered in. Bazookas and flamethrowers followed, setting the entire house on fire. George was injured by shrapnel.

On December 18, 1944, after more than 2 years of service, George was captured by the Germans. After the fight, the Germans flattened the surrounding town, shooting civilians and the mayor.

The Germans interrogated the soldiers before taking them to a German POW camp, where they were fingerprinted, photographed, given dog tags, and registered as prisoners of war. They remained there for 2 days before the Germans segregated the soldiers, sending officers to concentration

camps, forcing privates to work, and sending noncommissioned officers, including George, on a 5-month walk across Europe that broke their souls and their bodies.

George tells many vivid stories of the cold winter, lack of food and sleep, abhorrent treatment by their captors, and the good friends made along the way.

Thankfully, George was liberated on April 14, 1945.

In October 1945, George was discharged and returned to America. After a very long bus ride home, he arrived at his Alabama hometown, where his sister was so excited to see him that she forgot to unlatch the screen door and his faithful bulldog nearly broke down the door to get to him.

Four years later, George and his wife, Charlie, were married. They enjoyed 66 years of marriage before Charlie passed away in December 2015.

In 1983, George retired but stayed busy, traveling with his wife across America, Canada, and Europe, while looking up George's Army buddies along the way.

One of George's proudest moments came on November 16, 2006, when France's President named George Mills a Chevalier for his gallantry during the liberation of France.

Vigorous as ever, George is involved in the Military Order of the Purple Heart, The American Legion, the VFW, the Masonic Lodge, the Kiwanis Club, and several other community organizations.

He is a frequent speaker at several local high schools, community organizations, and church groups. A true southern gentleman, he is a beloved representative of America's Greatest Generation.

Mr. Speaker, George Mills' exemplary service to America and his local community is emblematic of what makes America a great nation.

I wish George Mills the very best as he and his family celebrate his 100th birthday.

HONORING THE LIFE OF THOMAS HESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. STEVENS) for 5 minutes.

Ms. STEVENS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of my incredible friend, Tom Hess, a beloved resident of Northville, Michigan, who we lost last month after a courageous battle with cancer at the age of 76.

Tom was born in Detroit in the summer of 1944 to Raymond and Jessie Hess.

After graduating from Michigan State University in 1966, he joined the United States Army, where he attended Infantry Officer Candidate School. He went on to complete all the training necessary to become a Green Beret and proudly served his country as a first lieutenant during the Vietnam war. This was something that Tom was